

Chapter 2: I Think I Married the Wrong Guy

In the middle of our seven-year bad-marriage mayhem, I talked with a co-worker who'd been married about twenty-three years to a really great man. I honestly couldn't imagine a cuter, more perfect Christian couple. It appeared they had the kind of marriage I could have had if I'd stayed with this one particular guy I met at a Whodini and Grandmaster Flash rap concert.

It was the eighties, alright?

Anyway, I'd been watching my co-worker, thinking she was in this "perfect" marriage with "the one" who was made just for her. I mentally kicked myself because I thought maybe I shouldn't have let concert-guy get away, or maybe I'd never meet "the one" since I was already married to the *um*-one.

My co-worker didn't know I was struggling in my marriage, but she was "good people," so I decided I'd pick her brain on one of those late Friday afternoons when everyone was sitting around the office waiting for the clock to strike quitin' time.

Somehow, I moseyed into the question, "Have you ever thought maybe you should have married someone else?"

She leaned forward and confessed, "There was this one guy in college, Bruce. He liked me and I liked him. I chose Phillip, but I have wondered what could have happened with me and Bruce."

Well, I wanted to know if Bruce was rich now, which would totally clear things up for me. But, of course, I had to dress up my inquiry a bit. "Have you seen Bruce since college? What's he up to?"

Her eyes twinkled slightly. "Yes. He was at our reunion. Still as handsome as ever. He's married, has kids, you know, a regular life."

Drats! Nothing spectacular. Just a regular guy with a regular life, much like the one she had with Phillip.

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I left that conversation feeling she hadn't really helped me, but in retrospect, I realize this brief talk could be summarized in the advice I'd give any wife who's wondering if she married the wrong guy. Here goes: In all likelihood, there's probably a fairly large number of guys you could have married to arrive at a "regular" marriage much like the one you're in now. I know, I know, everyone wants to feel like there's just ONE super-guy out there who's a perfect match.

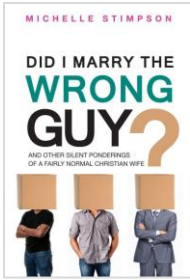
Step a-*waaaaaay* from the romance novel. No matter who you marry, half the marriage is already set because of *you*. Yes, *you* are going to show up in every relationship you have, so the other person can't possibly make *all* the difference. Who you married is, at most, only half the problem. Truth is: "The one" is whoever you make it work with.

Secondly, even if you believe you married the wrong guy, God is bigger than your mistakes and bad decisions. When He allows a less-than-perfect choice, He is willing and able to intervene upon sincere request.

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Father, I trust You with my past as much as my present and my future. Whatever I did or didn't do, I give to You. Your ways are higher than mine and I trust You to make sense of my decisions. Cause me to see how You have always watched over me, even to this point of complete surrender. Thank You, God, for pulling me back to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Chapter 8: I Feel Trapped



Nothing's worse than feeling like you're stuck in a relationship you can't escape because of kids, financial obligations, fear of embarrassment, or just plain old fear itself. I remember sitting down one day calculating how long it would be before my kids finished high school, figuring how much money I needed to pilfer between then and now so I could make a clean break. [Y'all, I still don't understand why I was so dead-set on sabotaging my marriage. I only hope women will learn from my foolishness!]

Somewhere in this crisis, I called my grandmother, who was married more than fifty years to my late grandpa. My grandmother was a feisty woman who left secretarial school against her parents' wishes in order to marry my grandfather and promptly gave birth to eight children. In the early years of my grandparents' marriage, my grandfather was...well...let's just say he was a juke-joint-piano-playin', whiskey-drinkin' rascal. My grandmother, a church-goin' woman, tolerated his sinful ways for many years before he gave his life to Christ and became a loving pastor.

I guess I figured if there was anyone who knew how to stay "trapped" indefinitely, Grandma would be the one.

So, I'm like, "Grandma, I know all these women in your generation stayed married for fifty and sixty years, but I want you to tell me the truth. Did y'all stay married because you *wanted* to or because you *had* to?" I go on to insinuate that, at some level, she and all the women in her circle were trapped. Really, where were they gonna go with all those kids and no education? No vocational skills? Not to mention being a woman of color in the 1950's south.

Before I got too carried away, she cut me off. "Mickey"—that's my nickname—"let me tell you something. There's a few folks I think shouldn'ta stayed married, 'specially women with beatin'-type husbands, but the rest of us stayed married 'cause *we told God* we would and that's all there is to it. A covenant is a covenant, don't matter what year it is."

"Okay, Grandma. I gotta go now."

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Now that Grandma has settled the covenant issue, let's just concede that you and I are indeed "trapped" and have been since the day we married our husbands. Only, back then, it was more like...love-locked. What's the difference? Our attitudes.

Honoring our commitments to God should bring tremendous joy and hope into our lives, not everlasting dread. When following the will of God is a burdensome chore, I find that an open, honest prayer to God is the best way to lay it all out on the table and release resentment so that He can restore me to the right perspective.

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God, I feel totally trapped in this marriage. If it weren't for the circumstances, I would have left already. I thank You for circumstances that cause me to pause and re-consider the covenant. You work all things for the good of those who love You. Lord, I ask You to change my perspective on this marriage. Line me up with Your word, for the sake of Your glory. And thank You for trapping me in Your eternal love. In Jesus' name, Amen.